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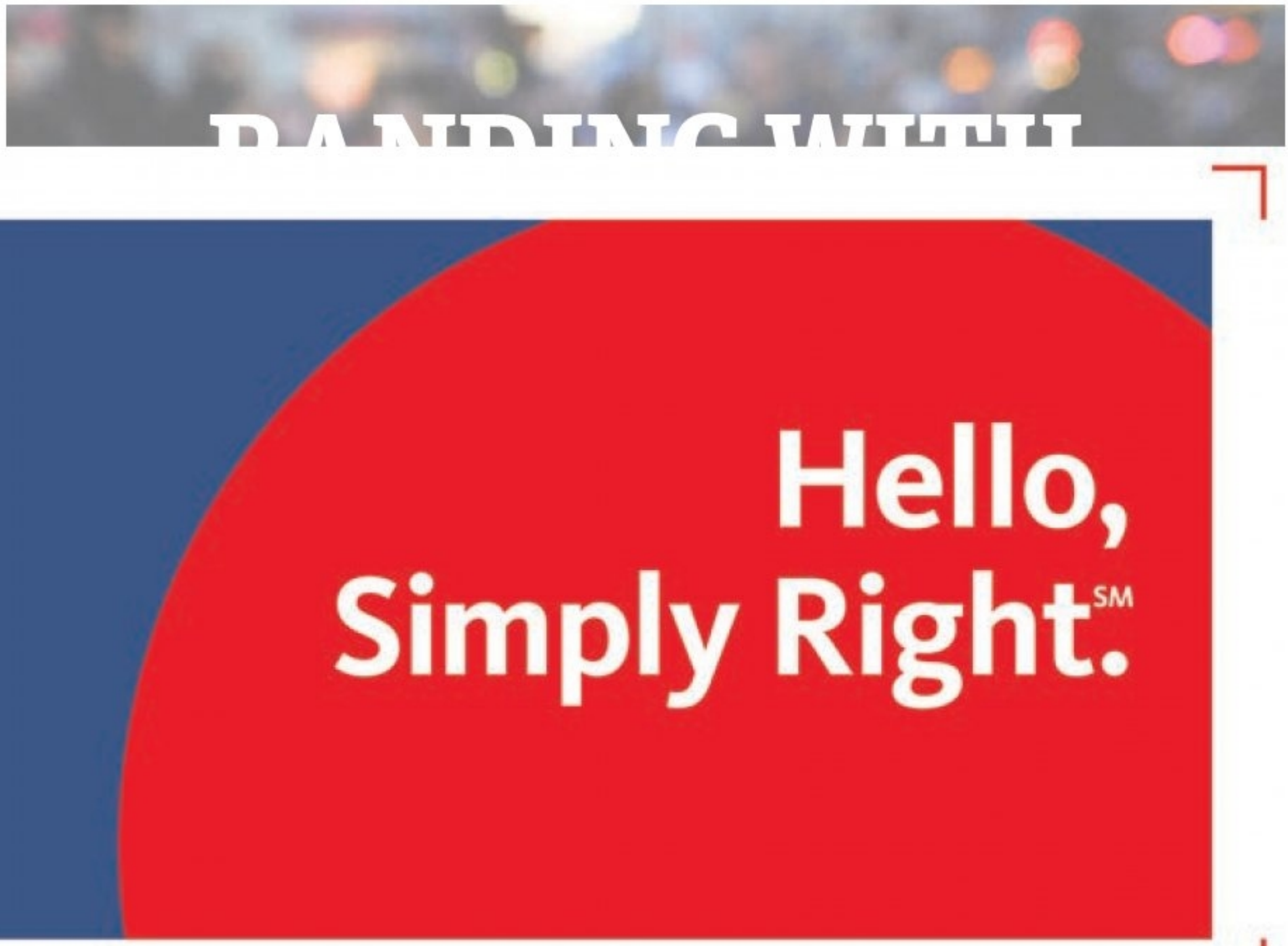
PHILADELPHIA NO. 1 FREE DAILY IN THE US
Wednesday, March 23, 2016 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly

NIA VARDALOS' SOFT SPOT

The 'Big Fat Greek Wedding' star lives for 'loser stories.' 18-19

'A Fierce Kind of Love' showcases adults with disabilities. 2

Projecting the Phillies' opening day roster. 24-25



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BANDING WITH BRUSSELS

The world is reeling after ISIS terrorists stole the lives of at least 30 people in suicide attacks in the Belgian capital. 3, 12-13

A local holds a rose while others ignite candles at Beursplein Square following Tuesday's attacks. GETTY IMAGES

3 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

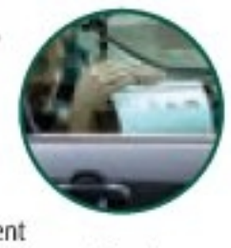
US CHARGES THREE SYRIAN HACKERS: JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

U.S. authorities have charged three Syrian nationals who are current or former members of the Syrian Electronic Army with multiple conspiracies related to computer hacking, the Justice Department said Tuesday. Ahmad Umar Agha, 22, and Firas Dardar, 27, were charged with a criminal conspiracy that included "a hoax regarding a terrorist attack" and "attempting to cause mutiny of the U.S. armed forces," the department said in a statement. Dardar and Peter Romar, 36, were separately charged with other conspiracies, including extortion and wire fraud, it said. The FBI said in the statement it was adding Agha and Dardar to its Cyber Most Wanted list and offering a reward of $100,000 for information leading to their arrest. REUTERS

RUSSIAN COURT SENTENCES UKRAINIAN PILOT TO 22 YEARS IN JAIL

A Russian court sentenced Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko to 22 years in jail Tuesday after finding her guilty of involvement in the killing of two Russian journalists during the separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said his country would never recognize the verdict of what he labeled a "kangaroo court" and called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to send Savchenko back to Ukraine. Fighting in eastern Ukraine has subsided since a fragile cease-fire was agreed, but Savchenko's trial showed the depth of bitterness that remains. Savchenko, 34, is a national hero in Ukraine but many in Russia see her as a Ukrainian nationalist with the blood of civilians on her hands. REUTERS

UBER OFFERS HACKERS 'TREASURE MAP' TO FIND COMPUTER FLAWS



Uber, the high-flying transportation firm, is releasing a technical map of its computer and communications systems and inviting hackers to find weaknesses in exchange for cash bounties. While "bug bounties" are not new, Uber's move is an example of how mainstream companies are increasingly relying on independent computer researchers to help them bolster their systems. Uber's "Treasure Map" details the ride-hailing company's software infrastructure, identifies what sorts of data might be exposed inadvertently and suggests which types of flaws are the most likely to be found. REUTERS

Photographer JJ Tiziou stands next to his exhibit, "Here," on display inside City Hall. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

Stories of intellectually disabled brought to light

An exhibition of portraits and interviews in City Hall aims to shed light on the stories of segregated lives.

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Standing in the stairwell of City Hall looking up at his series of portraits on display, photographer JJ Tiziou points out that the word photogenic does not mean "good-looking," as it is commonly used. It means "light-generating."

"It's not about how you look in pictures. It's about how you let that light shine, how we illuminate others," he said, looking up at his portraits of intellectually disabled adults from state centers and sheltered workshops. "When people live in segregated settings, our world is deprived of the light they can let shine."

Tiziou's portraits of residents and participants from Selinsgrove Center and KenCrest Services are up in City Hall's northeast stairwell through May 6 in a show titled "Here," as part of a yearlong series of events related to the ongoing project with Temple's Institute on Disabilities, "A Fierce Kind of Love."

Interviews with participants can be viewed on City Hall's fourth floor. Guided tours of the exhibit will be hosted on Wednesday and Thursday.

"We met really beautiful people," said Lisa Sonneborn, the project's coordinator. "The intellectual disability rights movement is a very compelling civil rights story that no one really knows about."

While Pennsylvania was the state where some of the first historical institutions for the developmentally and intellectually disabled were created, it was also the first state to open public schools to children with disabilities and shut institutions down.

About 1,000 state residents with intellectual disabilities live in state centers, and about 16,000 either work or learn to work at sheltered workshops and adult training programs.

The history that participants share in interviews, which can be viewed online, include stories most of us can never imagine.

Frank from Selinsgrove Center is a South Philly native who describes his first memory arriving to Selinsgrove at age 11. In his interview he describes working with small engines in the center's auto shop, and talks about being "proud" to be at Selinsgrove. The project brought him back into Philadelphia for the first time in decades.

If you go

In April, a mixed ability cast will perform "A Fierce Kind of Love," a play telling the story of the intellectual disability rights movement. Visit afiercekindoflove.org for more information.

"People who live in state centers or sheltered workshops … are usually asked about their health and safety," Sonneborn said. "It is less often that we really ask them about themselves, their childhoods, their memories, their desires long-term."

Others were institutionalized in places like Pennsylvania's infamous Pennhurst asylum — which was shut down decades ago and has since been repurposed as a haunted house attraction.

"Many people we interviewed lived at Pennhurst. They didn't all want to talk about it," Sonneborn said. "A lot of them probably have strong feelings about it being repurposed as a haunted house. We really want to think long and hard about how to support a community where some members were placed in inhumane conditions."

One former Pennhurst resident interviewed for the project, Betty, was taken back to Pennhurst by the Syfy channel show "Ghost Hunters" in a somewhat questionable choice by the show's producers.

"That's something I'll never forget and I hope that I never have to go into another institution for a long time," she said in her interview of her time at the asylum now known for its abusive treatment of patients.

The legacy of Pennhurst is just one small example of the history explored by this project, which first started in 2012. For Tiziou, the project was a chance to meet people who typically only interact day-to-day with caregivers, family members and other disabled adults.

"It was a chance to meet people I otherwise would never have crossed paths with — folks who have so much to offer, but remain unseen," he said. "It is an interesting question – why is this world so separate?"

SEPTA boosts security after terror attacks in Brussels

Officer Darrell James and Officer Stan Taylor outside Suburban Station on Tuesday afternoon. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

Riders can expect transit police to be a lot more visible in coming days.

JENNY DEHUFF
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

"Please, bother us. If you see something, say something."

That was the message of SEPTA Police Chief Thomas Nestel Tuesday as he urged Philadelphians to be vigilant in the wake of devastating terror attacks overseas earlier that day.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks in the Brussels, Belgium, airport and aboard a rush-hour metro train on Tuesday, which took the lives of 34 people.

Philadelphia transit safety officials are taking extra precautions in the wake of the attacks, and while Nestel wouldn't give specifics as to deployment numbers, he did say Philadelphians can expect to see SEPTA police "more visible" as the week goes on.

"Without talking about specific numbers, I can tell you that we will be more visible and we are asking the public to be more aware," said Nestel.

"If you see something suspicious and the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, we want to know. Call 911 immediately."

When asked about when and where security measures would be upped across SEPTA's transit map, Nestel said it would be counterproductive to give that information, as it would defy SEPTA's security stance.

"I can tell you that we are doing everything we believe is necessary to keep the public safe," he said.

By mid-morning Tuesday, Nestel and other officials from Philadelphia International Airport, Amtrak and more than 50 other law enforcement executives from around the country were on a conference call to discuss the next steps going forward.

"Everybody is keyed-in on what has happened and everybody is acting accordingly," said Nestel.

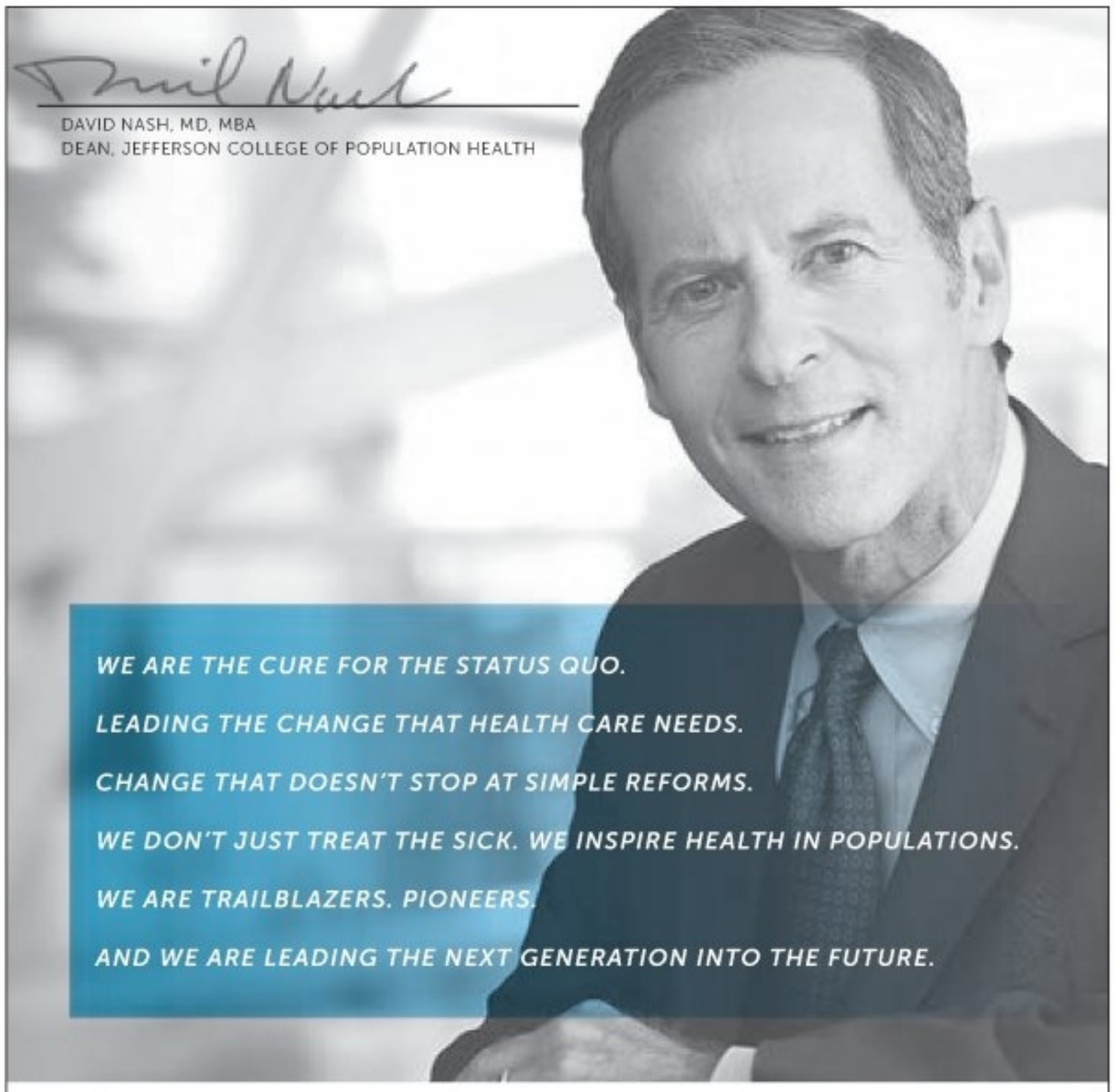
"No bag is beyond suspicion. I know that folks are reluctant to call 911 because they think they're burdening the police or bothering the police. Bother us. Call 911."

Diane Gerace, a spokeswoman for Philadelphia International Airport, told Metro that passengers should expect to see an increased presence of uniformed law enforcement in and around the airport.

"In addition, as always, we encourage passengers to follow the advice of Homeland Security — if you see something, say something," she said.

Unionized airport workers — specifically the wheelchair attendants and skycaps – had planned a one-day strike on Wednesday to protest what they called unfair wages lower than $12 an hour, but decided against it Tuesday.

"If you see something suspicious and the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, we want to know. Call 911 immediately."
Nestel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Two nabbed in attempt to smuggle drugs in doughnut

The two have been arrested on drug charges.

MATT LEE
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Ilker Ceyla, left, and Brian Perry Jr. PROVIDED

Two men were arrested on Monday after they were caught allegedly trafficking drugs into a high school by hiding pills in a doughnut, Philly.com reported.

The men, 21-year-old Brian Perry Jr. and 18-year-old student Ilker Ceyla, were arrested after officials at Bordentown Regional High School became suspicious of a bagged lunch Perry dropped off for Ceyla.

"School officials were suspicious and searched the bag, which contained a doughnut with six Xanax pills concealed in a plastic bag inside the hole, police said. Officials immediately contacted the police," the Burlington County Times reported.

Perry was arrested and faces several drug distribution and possession charges. He was released from jail after posting a $2,500 bail.

Ceyla was arrested and charged with multiple drug charges after police also allegedly found him to be in possession of marijuana.

Ceyla was placed in Burlington County Jail in Mount Holly and was later released.

Protesters want nominee considered

Some two dozen protesters gathered Tuesday outside the Center City offices of Pennsylvania Sen. Pat Toomey to call on him to consider Judge Merrick Garland as President Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

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Respect My Vote! campaign looks to engage beyond Election Day

The purpose of the campaign is to push individuals to get involved in all elections.

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With Election Day just months away, one campaign is hoping to encourage individuals to get out off the sidelines and let their voices be heard.

The Hip Hop Caucus — a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization which connects the hip-hop community to young people and members of urban communities to motivate participation in the civic process — launched Tuesday its 2016 Respect My Vote! campaign.

The nonpartisan campaign, which first kicked off during the 2008 elections, aims to help register, educate and organize voters between the ages of 18 to 40 years old.

"This campaign is focused on getting excitement around the process," said the Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr., president and CEO of the Hip Hop Caucus, who was in New York City to launch the campaign. "Getting disenfranchised communities to know that their voice matters."

As part of the process to encourage voter registration and activism, the campaign has been enlisting the help of celebrities who serve as representatives for the campaign and also help reach out to a larger crowd of potential voters.

Previous celebrities involved in the campaign included T.I. and 2 Chainz.

This year's first celebrity spokesman is Charlamagne Tha God, the host of the radio show "The Breakfast Club" and star of MTV2's "Uncommon Sense with Charlamagne Tha God."

According to Yearwood, getting celebrities to participate makes engaging in the process more exciting for some people and pushes other to go out and vote.

> *"You can't really sit on the sideline during this process. You matter, not just your vote."*
> Yearwood

"It's the first step but it's a major first step, because it then says not only are you going to vote, you are going to hold whoever wins accountable and measurable," Yearwood said.

Unlike in previous years, social media will play a large role in getting people involved with the campaign, using the hashtag #RespectMyVote and also having a large presence both on the campaign and Hip Hop Caucus' websites.

Yearwood added that he encourages individuals to also use a form of expression they feel comfortable with — such as poetry or music — the express themselves.

"For this generation of young people, they view this election process as very important," Yearwood said. "This is a unique generation, I wouldn't say they are quite revolutionary, they are solutionary. They want to find solutions to these huge problems."

The campaign is launching in time to encourage people to vote in this year's election, Yearwood said that the purpose of the campaign is to push individuals to get involved in all elections that can shape their lives..

The Rev. Lennox Yearwood
SHANA SCHNUR PHOTOGRAPHY

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Goldfish gets braces

Mr. Hot Wing, a standard goldfish, was having trouble breathing and eating, so he got braces.

He was taken to Lehigh Valley Veterinary Dermatology, and they discovered that he was born without a lower jaw bone; therefore, his mouth wasn't able to stay open.

Dr. Brian Palmeiro researched the condition and performed a surgery to open Mr. Hot Wing's mouth. Palmeiro, now also known as the "fish doctor," told ABC News that he created a custom brace made from a plastic credit card. According to ABC News, the whole surgery cost about $150.

Lehigh Valley Veterinary Dermatology posted the photo on their Facebook page on March 18 and described Mr. Hot Wing's story. The post has gone viral with over 400 likes so far. JACLYN MARR

Goldfish with braces LEHIGH VALLEY VET

Philly stop-and-frisks racially biased: Report

Commissioner Ross said the findings were due to a need to police black areas more heavily.

JASON NUCKOLLS
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letters@metro.us

A new report has indicated that Philadelphia police are influenced by racial bias in their implementation of stop-and-frisk procedures.

The report, issued on Tuesday by the ACLU, found that 33 percent of police stops and 42 percent of frisks in Philadelphia were unlawful, CBS3 reported, adding that the unlawful procedures impacted blacks and Latinos 80 percent of the time.

Commissioner Richard Ross said the report's findings were not due to a racial bias but rather on a need to police black areas more heavily, according to a report by the Associated Press.

"That is a fact that you can't deny," Ross was quoted in the AP report. "When people talk about neighborhoods being overpoliced, where would you suggest we have them?"

Ross said that police will add accountability measures and improve officer training on reporting stops more accurately, CBS3 added.

"The bottom line is the truth will be in the numbers coming forward," Ross was quoted by CBS3.

The report also found that frisks of minorities are less likely to have substantial results than frisks of whites, according to the AP article reported by 6ABC, which added that the lawyers who filed Tuesday's report said they will seek sanctions from the court this year if the department does not make "rapid and significant progress."

BRIEF

'I prolly had ur pics' teen sentenced to probation

A Montgomery County teenager pleaded guilty to posting nude pictures of young women from high school online and was sentenced to probation on Tuesday.

Brandon Tyler Berlin, 19, was sentenced to two years of probation, and ordered by a judge to perform 200 hours of community service, pay a $250 fine and undergo a "psychosexual evaluation," the Inquirer reported. He pleaded guilty to transmission of sexually explicit images by a minor, a misdemeanor.

Berlin, of North Wales, who was 18 and a high school senior when he was arrested in September, reportedly apologized in court for posting nude pictures of underage classmates at North Penn High School to a public Dropbox folder which was named "I prolly had ur pics."

That phrase was also Berlin's senior quote in the high school yearbook, prosecutors said at the time of Berlin's arrest.

Berlin PROVIDED

He said the pictures he collected were given to other teenage boys by their girlfriends, and to him by his girlfriend at the time, according to the Inquirer, telling the judge, "I'm very sorry for what I did."

About 30 photos were collected, and many students were reportedly involved, but only Berlin was charged.

Berlin was charged as an adult although most of the alleged crimes occurred when he was a minor. Ambler Borough authorities were first alerted by a female student in March 2015 to the online cache of underage porn. SAM NEWHOUSE

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Rob Ford dies of cancer at 46

The Toronto city councillor, 46, had been undergoing treatment for an aggressive form of cancer that had recurred despite surgery and several rounds of chemotherapy.

Rob Ford, the former mayor of Toronto who gained global notoriety for admitting to smoking crack cocaine while in office, died from cancer on Tuesday, his office said in a statement.

During his tumultuous 2010-14 tenure as mayor of Canada's most populous city, Ford admitted to smoking crack cocaine, buying illegal drugs and driving after drinking alcohol.

He was diagnosed in September 2014 with pleomorphic liposarcoma, a rare and hard-to-treat cancer found in soft, fatty tissue of the body, after he was admitted to a hospital with abdominal pain.

Rob Ford GETTY IMAGES

The man who replaced Ford as mayor, John Tory, offered his condolences, calling Ford "a man who spoke his mind and who ran for office because of the deeply felt convictions that he had." REUTERS

BRIEF

US says it may not need Apple to open San Bernardino iPhone

U.S. prosecutors said that a "third party" had presented a possible method for opening an encrypted iPhone used by one of the San Bernardino shooters, a development that could bring an abrupt end to the high-stakes legal showdown between the government and Apple.

A federal judge in Riverside, California, agreed to the government's request to postpone a hearing scheduled for Tuesday so that the FBI could try the newly discovered technique. The Justice Department said it would update the court on April 5.

The government had insisted until Monday that it had no way to access the phone used by Rizwan Farook, one of the two killers in the December massacre in San Bernardino, California, except to force Apple to write new software that would disable the password protection.

The Justice Department last month obtained a court order directing Apple to create that software, but Apple has fought back, arguing that the order is an overreach by the government and would undermine computer security for everyone.

The announcement on Monday that an unnamed third party had presented a way of breaking into the phone on Sunday — just two days before the hearing and after weeks of heated back-and-forth in court filings — drew skepticism from many in the tech community who have insisted that there were other ways to get into the phone.

"From a purely technical perspective, one of the most fragile parts of the government's case is the claim that Apple's help is required to unlock the phone," said Matt Blaze, a professor and computer security expert at the University of Pennsylvania. REUTERS

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Police hunt suspect after Islamic State kills 30 in Brussels suicide attacks

Officials said 20 died on the metro train close to European Union institutions, and Islamic State said that too was a suicide attack.

Passengers are evacuated from Zaventem Bruxelles International Airport after terrorist attacks. GETTY IMAGES

Islamic State claimed responsibility for suicide bomb attacks on Brussels airport and a rush-hour metro train in the Belgian capital on Tuesday which killed at least 30 people, with police hunting a suspect who fled the air terminal.

Police issued a wanted notice for a young man in a hat who was caught on CCTV pushing a laden luggage trolley at Zaventem airport alongside two others who, investigators said, had later blown themselves up in the terminal, killing at least 10 people.

The coordinated assault triggered security alerts across Europe and drew global expressions of support, four days after Brussels police had captured the prime surviving suspect in Islamic State's attacks on Paris last November.

Belgian authorities were still checking whether the attacks were linked to the arrest of Salah Abdeslam, according to Federal Prosecutor Frederic Van Leeuw, although U.S. officials said the level of organization involved suggested they had previously been in preparation.

Last week, explosives and an Islamic flag were found during a raid on a Brussels flat. Police also found a fresh fingerprint of Abdeslam's there, putting them on to his trail. It was not clear if Abdeslam had been involved at that stage in planning the airport attack.

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In a statement, Islamic State said "caliphate soldiers, strapped with suicide vests and carrying explosive devices and machine guns" had targeted the airport and metro station, adding that they had set off their vests amidst the crowds.

A bomb and an Islamic State flag were also found on Tuesday in a flat in Brussels, and Van Leeuw confirmed a manhunt was under way. "A photograph of three male suspects was taken at Zaventem. Two of them seem to have committed suicide attacks. The third, wearing a light-colored jacket and a hat, is actively being sought," he told a news conference.

A government official said the third suspect had been seen running away from the airport building. Local media reported police had found an undetonated suicide vest in the area.

After questioning Abdeslam, police issued a wanted notice on Monday, identifying 25-year-old Najim Laachraoui as linked to the Paris attacks. The poor quality of Tuesday's CCTV images and of the Laachraoui wanted poster left open whether he might be the person caught on the airport cameras.

Citizens of the United States, Spain and Sweden were among the injured, their governments reported.

Belgian media published the security camera picture of three young men pushing laden luggage trolleys. Police later issued a cropped version of the same photograph, showing only one of the three.

"If you recognize this individual or if you have information on this attack, please contact the investigators," the notice read. "Discretion assured."

Police operations were under way at several points in the city but a lockdown imposed immediately after the attacks was eased and commuters and students headed home as public transport partially reopened.

Belgium, home to the EU and the headquarters of the NATO military alliance, has sent warplanes to take part in operations against Islamic State in the Middle East.

Austrian Horst Pilger, who was awaiting a flight with his family when the attackers struck, said his children had thought fireworks were going off, but he instantly knew an assault was underway.

"My wife and I both thought 'bomb.' We looked into each other's eyes," he told Reuters. "Five or 10 seconds later there was a major, major, major blast in close vicinity. It was massive."

Pilger, who works at the European Commission, said the whole ceiling collapsed and smoke flooded the building. REUTERS

Nine Americans injured in Brussels attacks: ABC News

Nine Americans were injured in suicide bomb attacks on Brussels airport and a metro train on Tuesday, ABC News reported on Twitter.

The ABC News report did not give further details.

Three Mormon missionaries from Utah and a U.S. Air Force member and his family were among the Americans hurt in the deadly bomb attacks, government and church officials have said.

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Obama urges political and economic change in speech to Cubans

President Barack Obama challenged Cuba's Communist government with an impassioned call for democratic and economic change on Tuesday, addressing the Cuban people directly in a historic speech broadcast throughout the island.

Obama pressed hard for economic and political reforms and greater openness, speaking in a one-party state where little dissent is tolerated.

His speech was the high point of a trip made possible by his agreement with Cuban President Raul Castro in December 2014 to cast aside decades of hostility that began soon after Cuba's 1959 revolution, and work to normalize relations. Nonetheless, Obama minced no words in his calls for change.

President Obama GETTY IMAGES

"I believe citizens should be free to speak their minds without fear," Obama told the audience.

"Not everybody agrees with me on this, not everybody agrees with the American people on this but I believe those human rights are universal. I believe they're the rights of the American people, the Cuban people and people around the world," Obama said.

While he urged an end to the longstanding U.S. economic embargo on the island, Obama added that "even if we lifted the embargo tomorrow, Cubans would not realize their potential without continued change here in Cuba."

The scene of the leader of the United States, the superpower to the north once routinely reviled by the Cuban government, standing on Cuban soil urging such changes would have been unthinkable before the two countries began their rapprochement.

For years, Cuban leaders told American presidents to mind their own business. Indeed, Castro has been careful to state since the detente that it does not mean Cuba plans to change its political system, and that while his government is open to discuss any issue, it has to be with mutual respect. REUTERS

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Justin Bieber wants to be your drunken life coach

Hey, man — Justin Bieber has a beautiful plan for your life, OK? He's even dabbling in some motivational — if slightly intoxicated — speaking, if his recent L.A. concert is any indication. And just what is the main thrust of Bieber's life philosophy? Just, like, be yourself, yeah? "Let's be ourselves. I think the thing the world struggles with most is just being ourselves. I think people hate on people that just are themselves," Bieber said during a break from the evening's tunes. "Maybe I'm drunk, maybe I'm just speaking real s—t. But I feel like a lot of the reason why so many people hate on me is 'cause I'm just myself. You can hate on me for being myself, too, but I feel like if you just are yourself and are OK with being just yourself and making spontaneous decisions of just wearing whatever you want to wear and doing whatever you want to do ... you're going to make bad decisions sometimes but you ultimately want to make good decisions, so let's try to make the best decisions we can possibly know or feel and let's have a good night." Got all that?

Beyonce wants an empire of her own

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

A lot of married couples argue over things, but most probably don't squabble over whose record label is more successful. But then again, most people aren't Beyonce and Jay Z. There's reportedly new strife between Blue Ivy's parents because Beyonce has new plans to turn her own entertainment entity, Parkwood Entertainment, into a big, big deal. "She really wants to turn Parkwood into an empire now," a source tells Radar Online. "There is a lot of jealousy right now between Beyonce and Jay Z because her career is at a superhigh point and, unfortunately, Jay Z has been relatively stagnant in his own career in comparison." Maybe he shouldn't have announced his retirement so many times?

Kim Kardashian is suspicious of her family keeping up with her

You know you've reached peak conspicuous consumption when even Kim Kardashian takes notice. She's apparently curious as to why all her family members are rich — and it's making her suspicious of mom-ager Kris Jenner. "Kim feels like there are millions of dollars in question because Kris finances everyone's lavish lifestyle," a source says, noting that "everyone is suddenly getting Rolls Royces and mansions," according to the National Enquirer. "Kim feels Kris' spending is out of control, so she is doing an accounting because she's the only one bringing in that kind of money and thinks it's weird that everyone in the family is enjoying an extravagant lifestyle that seems to be beyond their individual means," the source explains. "She thinks millions are missing. Kim wants to be more hands-on to find out where the money is being allocated. She is starting to take an inventory to try to get to the bottom of this." So get ready for some hot accounting action, TV fans.

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Argentinean-Swedish singer-songwriter José González cheers up

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GETTY IMAGES

As a moody Argentinean kid born in Sweden and raised on records by Joy Division, Nick Drake and Elliot Smith, José González didn't have much chance but to be a quietly insular and quivering singer-songwriter of melancholy words and music. Even when he turned his attention to rock as a teen, it was sad in nature.

Intimate, skeletal albums such as 2005's "Veneer" and 2007's fleshed-out "In Our Nature," found González inward-looking, forlorn and angrily navel-gazing with the occasional hat tip to political song like, "How Low." After 2007, he spent time in bands such as Junip and Göteborg String Theory. Perhaps socializing as such opened him up, as González became more outward looking in his lyrics — cheerier even — for 2015's "Vestiges & Claws," and presumably, his current tour.

You had a seven-year gap between solo albums that ended with "Vestiges & Claws." What did you learn from being in bands that you brought back to your personal work?
When I started working on the new album, I found myself returning often to its demos, even though I had learned a lot from working as Junip. I went old-school. I actually felt more comfortable when I had a song that sounded too simple, even empty. I could truly produce something from that start point — what instruments to add, what additional structure I could give it. Mixing, too. So, yes I felt comfortable with all the production tricks I learned from those situations but still chose still to keep Vestiges & Claws sketchy and simple — raw, even.

The new album's overall vibe is so different from what we're used to lyrically from you, which is usually something more insular. The new album is more outward, filled with big universal love.
It's definitely a conscious effort to open up. Since my first album, I have been struggling with the monotony of my guitar playing and the emotions of my lyrics, often sad and melancholy. Those are first-person narratives. Even when my music was soft, there was aggression and frustration. I have been trying to move from that, so not to be a whining singing-songwriter. There are plenty of those around. I was always looking for more things to sing about — society, humanity. This time those topics with lots of metaphors came out, another sort of narrative. This is, for me, one step further.

Music doesn't have to be a direct reflection of how one feels or which relationships the author happens to exist in. What cheered you up?
I am just more comfortable. There are other subjects to sing about than myself and my relationships. I have been trying to do protest songs and political songs, like the ones from when I was young. I like how Rodriguez talks about the working classes or how John Lennon imagines one world. I think about those ideas a lot now, so that comes out.

You mentioned politics and protest. You're a clever outsider who has played in America many times. What do you think of our present-day presidential race? Are we funny? Are we pathetic?
Yeah, both.

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Nia Vardalos laughs at her pain

The actor-filmmaker talks "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2" and protecting her daughter.

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As you can imagine, Nia Vardalos is always up for talking about her screw-ups.

"I live for loser stories," the actress and screenwriter tells us while promoting her new film, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2," the sequel to her 2002 surprise monster hit. "When the first movie came out and all the craziness that came with it, I saw an ex-boyfriend, who had treated me badly. I'm not a vindictive person. I just want everyone to go on and have a happy life. But this dude was mean to me. So I saw him in the street and he says, 'What's going on, sunshine?' I thought, 'I'm finally having a moment where I can say I have a movie coming out.' I look back at him and a bird sh— on my head."

Pain, she says, is funny. That's one reason she didn't want to sugarcoat "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2." The sequel catches up with the same characters (and cast). Everyone's older, including Vardalos' Toula and her husband Ian, played again by John Corbett. Vardalos, now 53, who again wrote the script, wanted to milk getting older and being a parent of a college-bound teen (played by Elena Kampouris) for laughs.

"I just wanted people to play their ages, including John and me," Vardalos explains. "That's why I resisted the temptation to write us as 32. I thought it would be a little respectful of the audience who grew up with the film, to see themselves reflected on screen, again."

Vardalos drew from her own experiences in becoming a mother between the first and second films. She and her husband Ian Gomez went through a rigorous, painful experience in adopting a daughter, Ilaria, which she chronicled in the book "Instant Mom." Vardalos tries to protect her daughter's privacy, especially from paparazzi, which can be difficult.

"We have a game where we make it fun: She hides her face," Vardalos says. There was one time when things turned ugly: She caught a paparazzo taking her daughter's picture. She confronted him and the man kept claiming he didn't do it.

"I said, 'If I find those pictures online I'm going to find you,'" she says, laughing at how bold she was. Two days later she checked online and there they were. "My daughter was shocked. She said, 'But he said he didn't take it.' It was a terrible way to learn that adults lie. And yet, not a bad lesson."

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On diversity

Vardalos is also, of course, a woman trying to create female stories in a Hollywood that's mostly about catering to young boys. The last year has found diversity finally becoming an issue that people want to talk about.

"It was a subject that was categorized as whining as opposed to being reality," she says. "It's been terrible, and #OscarsSoWhite was so important. It's not saying that men don't have a place in the workplace, that white people don't have a place in the workplace. We're just saying there are other stories."

Nia Vardalos' Toula returns 14 years after the first "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." UNIVERSAL

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Don't be a jerk and spoil

We have no idea what's going on in this "Daredevil" image because no one's spoiled it to us yet. NETFLIX

The second season of "Daredevil" was just released last weekend on Netflix. Unlike with earlier Marvel series, I wasn't home to watch the entire thing, having been speaking on panels at Wizard World Las Vegas and begging people not to tell me what happened. So, while immersed in geek culture, there was one part of it that I couldn't talk about — which led to a discussion about spoilers.

We've all been spoiled for some show or film. I actually remember the first spoiler I ever encountered. When I was on the playground, I was told that Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia were brother and sister. In the midst of being squicked out, I was pretty pissed off. The movie had opened the night before and now I knew a huge plot point. Not cool, fellow first-graders. Not cool!

Here's the thing about spoilers: Some are accidental, but there are unofficial rules. First, journalists, don't post who died in the title. Don't put a picture of the person who died on your front page, at least for a week. I know the first four lines of my Legion of Leia articles show up on people's feeds, so all spoilers go below that with a warning. You get a week with movies. That said, you don't post them everywhere.

But wait! I saw the film. I should be able to tweet about the fact that so-and-so was killed in the new "Star Wars" movie. Yes, you can — but no, you should not. Before the Internet, who the killer was in a book was a spoiler. You know that jerk at the water cooler who told everyone? Yeah, we all hated him, too. It's strange that so many people think that it's totally OK to be that jerk on the Internet because "free speech, you guys." Sure, you have the right to say it. You're an a—, but you have the right.

For the nona—es, here's the deal: one spoiler-free week for movies and shows. Don't be a jerk, or I swear I'll tell you who died in that show you're not caught up on.

And studios, don't put your film's conflict resolution in the trailer. (I'm looking at you, "Batman v Superman" and "Terminator Genysis.") Whether you're the guys making the film or show, the journalists writing about it or the guy at the water cooler, in the words of Wil Wheaton: Don't be a d—.

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Election season brings out the nostalgic nesters in us, says Wayfair trendcaster Alex Bowman. WAYFAIR.COM

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LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

Home makeover, election year edition

We've got modern tips for a timely Americana update.

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Between the attack ads, the nonstop news coverage and the late-night talk show circuit, it can certainly feel like election year is invading your living room. But can it go so far as to inspire your decor? According to one home design expert, yes.

"During periods of political uncertainty, there is a natural inclination to reminisce about blissful memories — like family vacations or barbecues — and decor can easily trigger those memories," says Alex Bowman, lead trend forecaster of online home furnishing outlet Wayfair.

Maybe you're looking to create a nostalgic escape. Maybe you'd rather do anything, up to and including wallpapering, than watch another political debate. Either way, we asked Bowman for some tips on introducing a little Americana into our abodes.

First things first: Rethink 'Americana'

At some point, "Americana" became a dirty word. But contrary to popular — ahem, your suburban mom's — belief, the aesthetic has nothing to do with Longaberger baskets and teddy bear stencils. "Modern Americana actually still draws from the past, but less 1970s and more 1870s," says Bowman. "There's a utilitarian aspect to a hip Americana look. Think about your favorite pair of jeans; they're 100 percent comfortable and still stylish. We're pulling inspiration from America's pioneering past for pattern and color inspiration. Think: indigo stripes, hand-drawn botanicals and quilting-inspired geometrics. Reclaimed and distressed wood furniture adds an air of authenticity to the mix."

Go nautical

A flag on the front lawn is great. But if you want to nod to Old Glory's color scheme inside your home a bit less literally, take a cue from nautical decor. "Nautical is instantly patriotic," says Bowman. "Red, white and blue is the go-to color palette for a seaside inspired look. That sun-soaked and salt-washed look is something that we're drawn to from memories of family beach vacations."

Pattern, pattern and more pattern

Pattern will be especially big in the fall, when a preppy nostalgia takes hold as school returns to session and the election approaches. For a contemporary take, mix and match prints liberally. "If you already have a foundation of patterned decor, the easiest way to update is to add more pattern," says Bowman. "A good rule of thumb is to mix in different scales and subjects. If your sofa is covered in striped pillows, bring in a large-scale floral pillow and a washed-out oriental rug — the contrast of rigid stripes and organic floral adds huge impact to a living space."

Transition tips

Keeping up with decor trends requires considerable money or a little craftiness. Personally, we prefer the latter. Here are Bowman's top tips for keeping things fresh while keeping under budget.

"I keep a couple shelves in my closet dedicated to all the fun decorative objects I've collected over the years. So each season I can 'go shopping' in my own house to freshen up my decor." "Swapping out blankets and throws is an easy update. Retire wool and heavy blankets and replace them with 100-percent cotton and linen blends for a light and airy feel through warmer months." "Collect vases, jars and containers without hesitation — they work for candle holders, flowers, branches, terrariums and just grouped together in a collection." "Trays are great because they corral clutter. Stack your magazines in a tray, add a candle and — boom — instant update."

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It's time to get that garden into shape. ISTOCK

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Sixers looking for win No. 10

Philly has 11 games left to avoid ugly history.

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With 11 games remaining, the 76ers are looking to avoid repeating history. In order for that to happen, they need one more win. At least one.

The Sixers are 9-62 following a 91-75 loss at Indiana Monday night. There are three games remaining on this road trip. No game can be considered an easy win on their schedule. Every night is a challenge.

In 1972-73, the Sixers finished 9-73. It still remains the worst record in NBA history.

Yes, this current Sixers team has matched the nine wins. Ten would be better. Eleven or 12 would help their confidence.

A cynic could say it doesn't matter. It does.

This offseason promises to be fruitful with as many as four first-round draft picks, the potential of Dario Saric coming over and Joel Embiid finally healing from two years of foot injuries. Maybe a free agent or two decides he wants to be part of something for the future. There are endless possibilities.

For now, it's about finding an elusive victory.

"We don't talk or think about it," said point guard Ish Smith. "It may sound hard to believe, but we just need to put in good days. If we keep putting in good days, we'll see results. We don't always see them in the win-loss column, which can get frustrating. We just have to keep pushing and keep working. The wins will come. We believe in the work that we're doing and we believe in each other and what the coaches are demanding from us."

Making matters worse, the Sixers have been besieged with injuries. When you're already struggling for a win, it's even harder to accomplish that feat when players such as Jerami Grant and Robert Covington go down with injuries. Jahlil Okafor is out for the season while he awaits knee surgery.

> *"We are going to fight and scrap for everything."*
>
> 76ers guard Isaiah Canaan

"We are going to fight and scrap for everything," said guard Isaiah Canaan. "We know what the challenges are each night. We will keep coming out fighting and never quitting. You saw that against Washington. They went up big and we never stopped fighting. This team is great like that. We know the issues. We can't worry about it. We have to keep playing hard and fight to the end."

There have been few clunkers in this difficult season. It's a testament to head coach Brett Brown and the staff to have this young group of players playing as hard as they have all season.

"Being here, it has been so impressive seeing how hard the coaches work and how responsive the young players have been," said veteran forward Elton Brand, who acts as a second head coach on the floor with his experience. "It would be easy to lie down and give up at times. These guys keep coming back. It's really great to see and I'll do anything I can to help with the present into the future."

The immediate future is murky at best. One more win would help immensely. It's far from guaranteed, though.

Next up is a visit to Denver on Wednesday night. Stay tuned.

76ers guard Ish Smith gets to the rim. GETTY IMAGES

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Vincent Velasquez will likely start the season in the minors. GETTY IMAGES

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Predicting the Opening Day roster for the 2016 Phillies

A look at who should be on the squad in early April.

ZANE STALBERG
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As the Phillies draw closer to breaking camp and prepare to start the regular season in Cincinnati, tough decisions lie ahead. The organization has already begun to trim the roster, and have sent players such as J.P. Crawford and Jorge Alfaro to the minors, but questions still linger before Opening Day. Here is a look at what Philadelphia's 25-man roster might look like on April 4:

Starting pitchers

Aaron Nola, Jeremy Hellickson, Charlie Morton, Jerad Eickhoff and Adam Morgan

In large part, the Phillies' starting rotation has been settled. While Nola and Eickhoff continue to develop, Philadelphia will look to Hellickson and Morton, the staff's two veterans, to eat up innings. The one real battle is for the fifth spot. On one hand, you have Vincent Velasquez, the prize acquisition of the Ken Giles trade. On the other hand, you have Adam Morgan, who gave Philadelphia good innings in 2015. While many fans will want to see Velasquez because of his electric arm, Morgan should get the spot as Velasquez still needs work on his command and the team needs a left-hander in the rotation.

Infielders and catchers

Ryan Howard, Maikel Franco, Freddy Galvis, Darin Ruf, Carlos Ruiz, Cameron Rupp, Cesar Hernandez and Andres Blanco

Barring an unforeseen trade or injury, this decision should be fairly easy for Pete Mackanin. While players like Galvis and Rupp are just placeholders for prospects like Crawford and Alfaro, they are the more polished talent as it stands. It would not be a surprise to see Ryan Howard traded at the deadline, or Crawford and Alfaro supplant Galvis and Rupp when rosters expand, but for now this is the right group.

Outfielders

Odubel Herrera, Peter Bourjos, Tyler Goeddel and David Lough

Philadelphia's outfield situation got much more complicated when Aaron Altherr went down for four-to-six months with a left wrist injury. While Herrera, Bourjos and Goeddel have essentially been locks for months, Altherr's presence would have allowed Goeddel to develop at a more natural pace. Now, Goeddel has been thrust into a starting role, and the Phillies lack legitimate options at the fourth outfield spot. While it is possible that Philadelphia could add a veteran bat to fill that role, as ESPN's Jayson Stark reported, right now their best option is Lough. The veteran outfielder has hit .308 with four RBIs and a .438 OBP while Cody Asche continues to deal with an oblique injury.

Relievers

David Hernandez, Andrew Bailey, Edward Mujica, Dalier Hinojosa, Bobby LaFromboise, James Russell and Brett Oberholtzer

Matt Klentak's affinity for redemption stories may benefit Philadelphia for years to come. This spring, Bailey and Mujica, who were relatively forgotten men, have combined to allow one run and three hits in eight games. Along with Hernandez, they form a solid a group in the back of the bullpen. Beyond that, the Phillies will likely use Hinojosa, LaFromboise and Russell in the middle innings.

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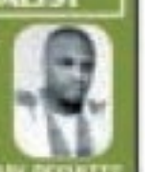

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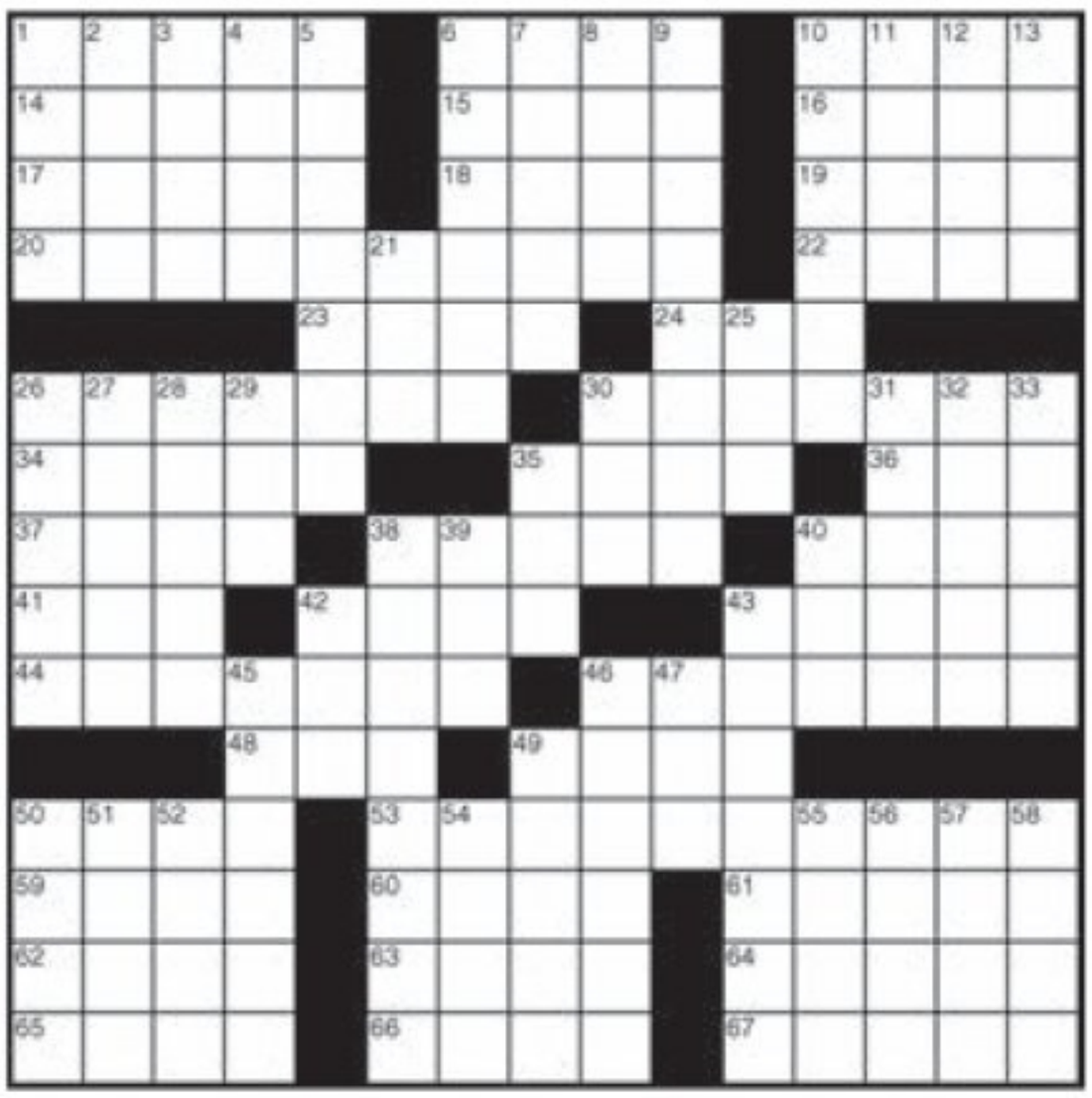

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6 Powder base
10 Spinach is rich in it
14 Leering sort
15 Potpourri
16 View from an oasis
17 Classic Tierney role
18 Daybreak, in verse
19 Down Under birds
20 Private eye's attire
22 Off. helper
23 Lettuce unit
24 Peoria's st.
26 Make wine
30 Ground, as teeth
34 Excludes
35 Modem word
36 Suffix for press
37 Dappled horse
38 Rather
40 Mars, to Plato
41 Legal rep.
42 Reunion attendee
43 Bedside item
44 Ached for
46 Gazes into the sun
48 USN rank
49 Globetrot
50 Sergeant's supper
53 Common fossils
59 Name in essays
60 "Othello" heavy
61 Romantic interlude
62 "Fatha" Hines
63 Pointed arch
64 — Jean Baker
65 Elbow opposite
66 Techie
67 Melancholy

Down

1 Tim — of oaters
2 Culture dish goo
3 Veer off-course
4 Graceful seabird
5 Sibyls
6 Four-footed Romeo
7 Standoffish
8 Luigi's dollar, once
9 Go on
10 Things to uphold
11 Sugar cane products
12 Disagreeable task
13 Treetop refuge
21 Egg producer
25 Stripling
26 Raid
27 Ham it up
28 Gaucho's rope
29 Natural elev.
30 B-movie pistol
31 A Great Lake
32 Upright
33 Work stations
35 Fragment
38 Wonder about
39 Sturm — Drang
40 MacGraw of films
42 — Arbor, Michigan
43 Sidewalk edge
45 Used-car deal
46 Flew or sang alone
47 "— Vadis?"
49 Kind of lily
50 Too mild
51 Zest for life
52 King's address
54 Come unglued
55 Rock star, maybe
56 Greenhorn
57 "Blondie" kid
58 Close violently

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easy

5				6			9	
9			2				4	
				5		6		
6		1			4		2	
4	2		9	8	7		5	6
	5		1			9		4
		5		1				
	7				3			5
	1			9				7

hard

1						7	6	
				6	8			2
			3	7		4	8	
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2	3		8		6		1	7
	6					2		
	4	9		8	7			
7			6	4				
	1	2						4

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Aries Avoid emotional meltdowns. Back away from bullies or insensitive people. Focus on facts and what it will take to get what you want or get you where you want to be.

Taurus Make your move and don't stop until you reach your destination. Let a past mistake help you make the right choice now. Romance will lead to certainty.

Gemini A strategic plan of attack will ensure your victory. Don't share personal information, or interference will result. Negotiate shrewdly and invest conservatively.

Cancer Do whatever it takes to bring about reforms that will improve your life and community. Target your goal and be persistent. Showing dedication will impress someone.

Leo Focus on your work and complete whatever job you are given. Complaints will be made if you don't honor a promise. Your ability to think fast and lead well will not go unnoticed.

Virgo You will gain knowledge if you share information and participate in educational functions. Networking, socializing or concentrating on a love interest will enhance your life.

Libra Consider making an investment or channeling money into your living space. Don't give in to emotional bickering. Avoid unpredictable people making empty promises.

Scorpio If you offer something unique, you will get something priceless in return. Create a situation that will bring about change and lead to more fun and personal happiness.

Sagittarius By making wise choices, you can gain the freedom to enjoy life and be surrounded by people who share your interests. Helping a worthy cause will lead to greater opportunities.

Capricorn A lifestyle that fits your personal goals will help you flourish. A different approach to your work will result in stability and reduced stress. Love is in the stars.

Aquarius Re-examine your goals and prioritize them to fit current possibilities. Trying to do everything at once will result in little getting done. A direct approach will lead to success.

Pisces Don't let emotional manipulation drag you down. A conservative, honest approach will help you avoid interference and assist you in building a solid plan for the future. **EUGENIA LAST**

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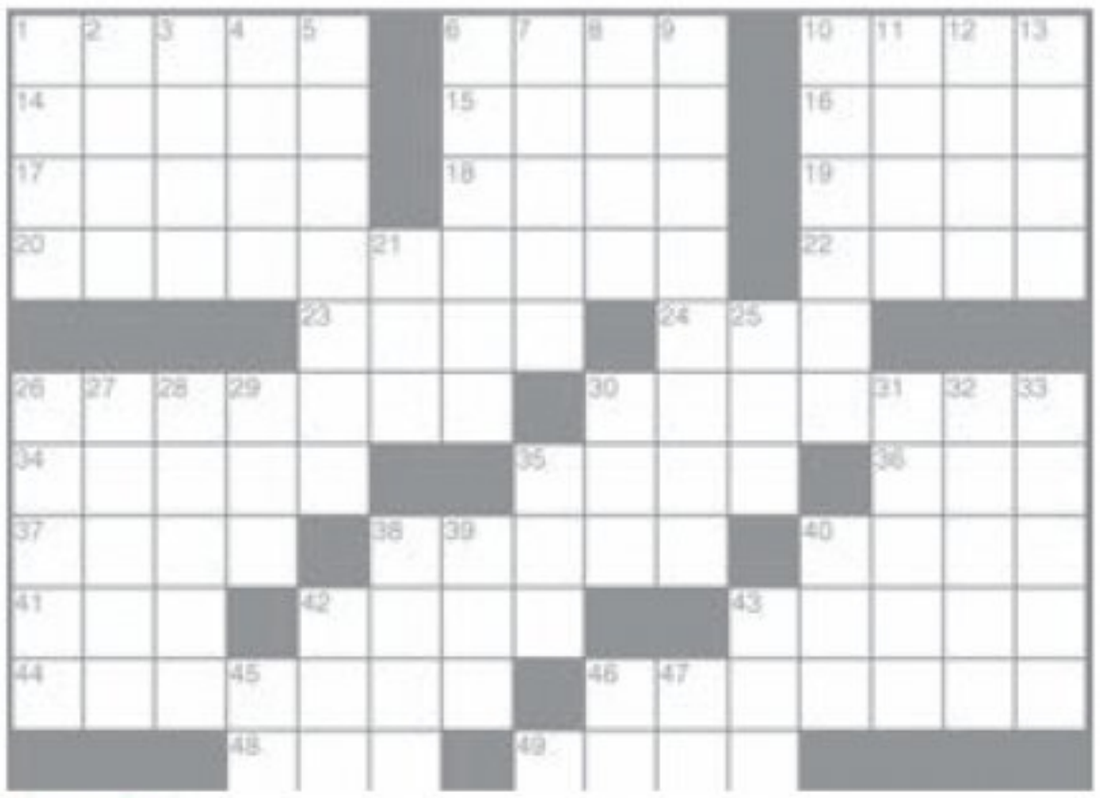

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63 Pointed arch
64 — Jean Baker
65 Elbow opposite
66 Techie
67 Melancholy

9 Go on
10 Things to uphold
11 Sugar cane products
12 Disagreeable task
13 Treetop refuge
21 Egg producer
25 Stripling
26 Raid
27 Ham it up
28 Gaucho's rope
29 Natural elev.
30 B-movie pistol
31 A Great Lake
32 Upright
33 Work stations
35 Fragment
38 Wonder about
39 Sturm — Drang
40 MacGraw of films
42 — Arbor, Michigan
43 Sidewalk edge
45 Used-car deal
46 Flew or sang alone
47 "— Vadis?"

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